

LIST OF CURRENT CLAIMS

c/ 1. (Currently Amended) Covering for a surface, comprising a number of successive panels (2) ~~on the one hand~~, and of fixing means (3) therefor ~~on the other hand~~, said fixing means comprising holders (4) including fixing parts (10-11-12-13), said fixing parts arranged to engage and retain the panels (2) in a disconnectable manner over a part of a the thickness of the panels (2); said panels being mounted in rows, and after they have been mounted on the holders, can be separated from their respective holders and removed without interference with the panels which are located in the adjacent rows on either side, and

wherein the panels mesh on their edges by means of a tongue and groove joint, either directly or by means of an inserted element, said meshing including locating of a tongue within a groove.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders (4) are each provided with at least two fixing parts (10-11-12-13) made in one piece with the holders, and which are arranged so as to co-operate with two edges or portions of one and the same panel (2) respectively; ~~for example with the opposite edges (6-7) thereof, or with portions situated in the vicinity thereof.~~

4. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders (4) comprise separate elements which are fixable ~~can be fixed~~ on a base, ~~whereby and wherein~~ each holder (4) cooperates with a respective single panel (2).

5. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders (4) comprise elements ~~which can be fixed~~ fixable on a base, and wherein each holder (4) includes fixing devices (3) which are arranged to co-operate with several panels (2) situated next to one another.

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6. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders (4) ~~are each provided with~~ include two fixing parts (12-10) ~~which are~~ arranged to co-operate with the edges or with panel portions situated near the panel edges respectively, of two adjacent panels (2).

7. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, including a spacer and wherein said holders (4) co-operate with said spacer, ~~for example a profile (55) upon or onto which the panels are mounted.~~

8. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein each holder (4) includes a stopping part (23) with which said holder (4) can be positioned against a panel or holder part of a the covering (1) which has already been installed, ~~either against a holder (4) thereof, or against a panel (2) thereof.~~

9. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 8, wherein the stopping part (23) is formed of a protruding lip which functions as a spacer.

10. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 8, wherein the holder (4) has a configuration design, on the side where the stopping part (23) is situated ~~on the one hand~~, and on the opposite side thereof ~~on the other hand~~, such that when several of said holders (4) are mounted one after the other, the stopping part (23) of the one holder (4) can be freely ~~brought up~~ located against the edge (6) of the panel (2) which is being held by the other holder (4).

11. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 10, wherein ~~every~~ each respective holder (4) ~~concerned~~ is provided with at least one stopping part (23) on one edge, and is provided, opposite ~~every~~ each stopping part (23), with a portion which leaves the edge (6) of a clamped-in panel (2) free.

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12. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders (4) include clamping devices (31) which are arranged so as to enable the holders to be snapped-in on an underlying structure.

13. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, ~~wherein each holder (4) includes fixing parts (10-11-12-13) which co-operate with the panels (2) and, at least on one side, every fixing part (10-11 or 12-13) has~~ each fixing part including features which facilitate a smooth, lateral, flexible bending, and so that in a direction perpendicular to the surface of the covering (1) a firm interlocking is enabled.

14. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 13, wherein said fixing parts (~~10-11 or 12-13~~) comprise elastically bendable lips which are shaped by bending each lip backward out of the plane of the holder (4), and then forward again.

15. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 14, wherein each of the holders (4) is equipped with a combination of one or several fixing parts (~~12-13~~) ~~on the one hand~~ which are formed of said elastically bendable lips which are shaped by bending each lip backward out of the plane of the holder (4) and then forward again, each said bendable lips to further ~~form~~ including a hook-shaped part (17), and of one or more fixing parts (~~10-11~~) ~~on the other hand~~ which are equipped provided with a relatively rigid hook-shaped part (15), and wherein at least one of the fixing parts (~~10-11 or 12-13~~) also has an inclined guiding part (16).

16. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 14 wherein the elastically bendable lips which are bent backward out of the plane of the holder (4) and then forward again, comprise two parts (~~28-29~~) ~~respectively, and in that~~ wherein a the second part (29) is made such that, in a state of rest when no panel (2) has been provided in it yet, is pressed against the other part (~~28-51~~) with a certain force (F), such that a the position of the lower end of the second part (29), and thus of ~~the a~~ hook-shaped part (17) formed there, is always fixed.

17. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 52, wherein the panels (2) overlap each other at their adjacent edges (6-7).

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18. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 17, wherein the panels (2) include overlapping parts (25-26) on the opposite edges (6-7), whereby, when mounted, a first part (26) of one panel (2) is located behind a second part (25) of an adjacent panel (2), and wherein a recess or free portion (27) is provided on the second part (25), such that the one panel (2) can always be freely rotated outward along about the first part (26).

19. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 17, wherein the panels (2) may be meshed together at their adjacent edges, but nevertheless may still be laterally shifted when mounted on said holders, against ~~the~~ a spring force exerted by said elastically bendable lips of ~~one or several fixing parts (10-11-12-13) provided on each respective holder (4)~~, and wherein the meshing is such that a single panel (2) can be removed from between the adjacent panels (2) by shifting the panel parallel to the covering and by subsequently rotating the panel.

20. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 19, wherein each respective fixing part (10-11) includes a guiding part (16) arranged so that the panels (2), when being pressed in for engagement with the fixing parts, are shifted laterally ~~to be~~ and subsequently shifted back when mounted, whereby said guiding part (16) ensures that the respective meshing parts first pass one another to subsequently mesh one after the other as a result of the shifting back.

21. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders (4) include gripping means (41) which provide a tight grip when said holder (4) is secured on a base.

22. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 21, wherein said gripping means ~~(41)~~ comprises points of support ~~(44-45)~~ which are located on either side of a fixing point ~~(42)~~ and which are made such that the holder ~~(4)~~ is slightly bent when being secured, so that the holder ~~(4)~~ is tightened against the base on said points of support ~~(44-45)~~ when secured on the base.

23. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders ~~(4)~~ each include only one fastener fixing point ~~(42)~~.

24. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders ~~(4)~~ include positioning means ~~(46)~~.

25. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 24, wherein the positioning means ~~(46)~~ comprises a supporting surface ~~(47)~~, enabling the holder ~~(4)~~ to be laterally pressed against a base, said supporting surface ~~(47)~~ comprising an L-shaped seating together with the bottom side of the holder ~~(4)~~.

26. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1, or 52 wherein the panels ~~(2)~~ ~~and/or the fixing parts~~ are provided with bevelled ~~and/or rounded-off~~ edges ~~(49-50)~~ which facilitate the turning in and out of the panels ~~(2)~~ relative to each other.

27. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders ~~(4)~~ each comprise at least two pairs of fixing parts ~~(10-11-12-13)~~ per panel ~~(2)~~ to be held, said pairs situated on either side of a stopping part ~~(23)~~ located in the middle of the holder.

28. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein each holder ~~(4)~~ comprises only one pair of fixing parts per panel ~~(2)~~ to be held.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 ~~29~~, wherein the fixing means ~~(3)~~, as well as ~~the~~ said tongue and groove joint, enable the panels ~~(2)~~ to be rotated along the side of the tongue ~~(35)~~ during assembly and disassembly of the panels and holders.

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31. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 30, including ~~fixing parts (10-11-12-13)~~ and wherein ~~said~~ fixing parts ~~are~~ located along the side of ~~the~~ a tongue, each of said fixing parts located along the side of a tongue including features which include a smooth, lateral, flexible bending, and so that in a direction perpendicular to the surface of the covering a firm interlocking is enabled. ~~(35), said fixing parts corresponding to the fixing parts defined in claim 13.~~

32. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 ~~29~~, wherein the fixing means ~~(3)~~, as well as ~~the above-mentioned~~ said tongue and groove joint, enable the panels ~~(2)~~ to be rotated along the side of the groove ~~(36)~~ during the assembly and disassembly of the panels and holders.

33. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 32, including ~~fixing parts (10-11-12-13)~~, and wherein ~~the~~ said fixing parts ~~are~~ located along the side of the groove, each fixing part located along the side of the groove including features which facilitate a smooth, lateral, flexible bending, and so that in a direction perpendicular to the surface of the covering a firm interlocking is enabled. ~~(36) said fixing parts corresponding to the fixing parts defined in claim 13.~~

34. (Canceled)

35. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52 ~~34~~, wherein said inserted elements are connected to one panel ~~(2)~~ such that they always occupy a specific lateral position.

36. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1, wherein, the tongue and groove of the tongue and groove joint is formed in the panels, and the panels (2) include coupling parts in the shape of a tongue (35) and a groove (36), and in that at least one of the tongue and groove these coupling parts is located outside a respective fixing part (10-11, 12-13) when the panels are engaged and retained by the fixing parts mounted.

37. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the panels (2) are provided with parts fitting one after the other, and in that the part which is situated on one longitudinal edge of the panels (2), extends up to the vicinity of the fixing part (12) of a following panel (2) to be mounted.

38. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 37, wherein said part extends to underneath and beyond said fixing part (12) and/or up to a distance (D4) past this fixing part (12).

39. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the panels (2) consist comprise of laths.

40. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the panels (2) include connecting devices on their crosscut sides.

41. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 40, wherein the connecting devices provide for an interlocking, both in a direction which is at right angles to the surface of the covering (1) and in a direction which is parallel to the surface of the covering (1).

42. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the panels (2) have a massive core.

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43. (Original) Covering according to claim 42, wherein the panels are made from a material selected from the group consisting of wood and a product having a wood base, including MDF or HDF.

44. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein the holders (4) include fixing parts ~~(10-11 or 12-13)~~ on one side which are formed of a rigid, hook-shaped part ~~(15 or 17)~~.

45. (Currently Amended) Covering according to claim 1 or 52, wherein two or more panels (2) are connected at their crosscut ends by means of an accessory (61), said accessory comprising a body having (62) and bent edges (63-64) formed on said body (62) which co-operate with said the edges of the panels (2).

Claims 46, 47 and 48 (Canceled)

49. (Currently Amended) Method for installing a covering formed of panels (2) which are provided with a tongue (35) and a groove (36) respectively on at least two opposite edges (5-6) which function as a unit when assembled, comprising mounting holders (4) with fixing parts ~~(10-11-12-13) which can work in conjunction~~ cooperating with said panels (2), and then hooking each panel in a respective holder (4) with one panel edge and then rotating the panel into the plane of the covering (1) so that not only are the panels (2) fixed between the fixing parts of the holders (4), but also said tongue (35) and groove ~~(36)~~ are coupled together with a tongue inserted in a respective groove.

50. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 49, including the step of shifting ~~the panels (2) with their~~ each panel with an edge that which is provided with the groove (36) over the tongue (35) of a previously installed panel (2), or vice versa, said interlocking part of the holder (4) being laterally bent, so that a hooking-in is achieved on the opposite interlocking part.

51. (Previously Amended) Method for disassembling a covering installed according to claim 50, comprising reversing the steps recited in claim 50.

52. (New) Covering for a surface, comprising a number of successive panels, and of fixing means therefor, said fixing means comprising holders including fixing parts, said fixing parts arranged to engage and retain the panels at least on one side in a disconnectable manner over a part of the thickness of the panels, each fixing part including features which facilitate a smooth, lateral, flexible bending, so that in a direction perpendicular to the surface of the covering a firm interlocking is enabled;

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said features including elastically bendable lips which are bent backward out of the plane of the holder and then forward again, said lips comprising two parts, wherein the second part is made such that, in a state of rest when no panel has been provided in it yet, is pressed against the other part with a force (F), such that the position of the lower end of the second part, and thus of a hook-shaped part formed there, is always fixed.

53. (New) Covering according to claim 1, wherein the panels are provided with rounded-off edges which facilitate turning in and out of the panels relative to each other.

54. (New) Covering according to claim 1, wherein the panels are provided with beveled and rounded-off edges which facilitate turning in and out of the panels relative to each other.

55. (New) Covering according to claim 1, wherein the fixing parts are provided with beveled edges with facilitate turning in and out of the panels relative to each other.

56. (New) Covering according to claim 1, wherein the fixing parts are provided with rounded off edges which facilitate turning in and out of the panels relative to each other.

57. (New) Covering according to claim 1, wherein the panels and fixing parts are provided with beveled edges which facilitate turning in and out of the panels relative to each other.

58. (New) Covering according to claim 1, wherein the panels and fixing parts are provided with rounded off edges which facilitate turning in and out of the panels relative to each other.

59. (New) Covering for a surface, comprising a number of successive panels, and fixing means therefore, said fixing means comprising holders including fixing parts, said fixing parts arranged to engage and retain the panels in a disconnectable manner over a part of the thickness of the panels;

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said panels mounted on said holders in rows wherein the panels, after they have been mounted, can be separated from their respective holders and removed without interference with the panels which are located in adjacent rows on either side;

each fixing part including features which facilitate a smooth, lateral, flexible bending, and so that in a direction perpendicular to the surface of the covering a firm interlocking is enabled;

flexible bending of a bendable fixing part enabling a panel secured by said fixing part to be released from its respective holder upon movement of said panel in a direction causing flexible bending of said bendable fixing part in a direction enabling separation of a side of said panel opposite a side located at said bendable fixed part from a fixing part retaining said panel in direction perpendicular to a surface of the covering, to thereby release the panel from the firm interlocking with said fixing part.

60. (New) Covering according to claim 59, wherein the holders comprise separate elements which can be individually fixed on a base, wherein each holder cooperates with a respective single panel.

61. (New) Covering according to claim 59, wherein the holders comprise separate elements fixable on a base, each holder cooperating with a respective single panel, and each holder comprising two fixing parts made in one piece with the respective holder, said fixing parts arranged to cooperate with two edges or portions of one and the same panel respectively.

62. (New) Covering according to claim 59, wherein said fixing parts comprise elastically bendable lips which are shaped by bending each lip backward out of the plane of the holder and then forward again.

63. (New) Covering according to claim 59, wherein said panels and the fixing parts opposite laterally bendable fixing parts of a holder are configured such that when a panel is inserted with one edge behind a laterally bendable fixing part of a holder the panel may be fixed by urging it upward into engagement with the opposite fixing part of the respective holder.

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64. (New) Covering for a surface, comprising a number of successive panels and of fixing means, said fixing means comprising holders including fixing parts, said fixing parts arranged to engage and retain the panels in a disconnectable manner over a part of the thickness of the panels, said holders comprising separate elements fixable on a base, wherein each holder cooperates with a respective single panel; a spacer cooperating with said holders; said spacer comprising a profile and said holders being formed of plastic.

65. (New) Covering for a surface, comprising a number of successive panels and a fixing means, said fixing means comprising holders including fixing parts, said fixing parts arranged to engage and retain the panels in disconnectable manner over a part of the thickness of the panels, said covering comprising a floor covering, said holders comprising thin, flat strips, and said fixing means comprising fixing parts protruding from a surface of said strips.